December 31st Marks the 22nd Anniversary of the Chicago Fog Bowl

The United States National Weather Service in Chicago, Illinois

2010

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December 31, 2010 will mark the 22nd anniversary of the Chicago Fog Bowl. On December 31, 1988, the Chicago Bears faced off with the Philadelphia Eagles at Soldier Field in downtown Chicago. Midway through the second quarter of the game, a relatively small, but very dense area of fog that had been moving south down Lake Michigan moved onshore, quickly dropping visibilities to between 10 and 20 yards for the remainder of the game. The fog proved to be a particular challenge for players and spectators alike, with both teams being forced to a running game as receivers could no longer see the football, and fans and television announcers finding it nearly impossible to see the action on the field. The end of the game was a happy one for fans of the Bears, however, as they prevailed 20-12.

Bears and Eagles faceoff in 1988 "Fog Bowl". Image courtesy of NFL.com

Below are hourly observations from the former Meigs Field, now Northerly Island. Note that visibilities had been around 3 miles during the morning with a west-southwest wind, but by about 10 minutes after noon, winds had shifted to the southeast, very dense fog rolled in off Lake Michigan, and visibility only went down from there!

Time	Wind Direction	Visibility (miles)
9:00 AM	WSW (250 deg)	3.0
10:00 AM	WSW (240 deg)	3.0
12:10 PM	SE(150 deg)	1.5
12:54 PM	SE (130 deg)	0.0
2:00 PM	SE (120 deg)	0.0
3:00 PM	ESE (110 deg)	0.0
4:00 PM	E (90 deg)	0.5

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